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Internal Affairs

Rabin-Peres Relations Described

93AE0022B Tel Aviv YEDIO'T AHARONOT (Weekend Supplement) in Hebrew 2 Oct 92 p 12

[Article by 'Orli 'Azoli-Katz: "Rabin-Peres: How They Get Along"]

[Text] In contrast to the verbal festivity of Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres, Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin is described as someone who does not see the historical greatness of the hour. Peres talks of "sensational times in our relations with Syria"; Rabin says "slow down" and recounts the difficulties. The Foreign Ministry is beating the drums; Yitzhaq Rabin is putting on the brakes. Peres draws a Tel Aviv-Damascus tourist route; Rabin stubbornly insists on zero expectations.

"Yes, yes, we have already heard about him," they say in the Prime Minister's office. "He has already set up a water line from Turkey to Israel, turned the Middle East green—words, words, what can you do, that is his nature."

These days Yitzhaq Rabin is trying to create drama that will move the dialogue with the Syrians to a higher gear. Leah Rabin has announced that she is prepared to cook for the Syrian president, and Rabin is going all out for a summit with Assad.

Political analysis in Jerusalem has it that Rabin is hurrying to set up the dialogue with the Syrians at the Prime Minister level despite the fact that conditions are not yet ripe only so that he does not suddenly find the dialogue being conducted at the Foreign Ministry level.

"Nonsense not even worthy of response," they say to that in Rabin's office, adding that they only wish they could set up a meeting at the level of canteen service sergeant between the Syrians and the Israelis, but the sad fact is that even that is still very far off.

In Rabin's office as well as in Peres's they are making a supreme effort to get the media off of stories of tension between them. There is an open channel of communication between 'Eytan Haber, Rabin's office chief, and Yosi Beilin, Peres's deputy. Lately they have been coordinating their positions and speaking with the press in reassuring tones. "Relations between Peres and Rabin have not been as good in 20 years," they say in Rabin's office, and in Peres's office they nod their heads and say: "Yes, that is correct."

Coffee Without Poison

On election eve, when Yitzhaq Rabin gave his "I, I" speech, his supporters rubbed their hands in satisfaction. They assumed he would do everything to dwarf Peres in his government, and if he would give him the Foreign Ministry portfolio, he would cut his prerogatives, with the conduct of peace staying in the Prime Minister's office and Peres removed from the political process.

But a week later Rabin invited Peres to his house Saturday morning and the two of them made their peace, as in the past. Despite the disagreements, they continue to make their way together in a strange relationship of dependence and fear. Like a married couple. For 40 years already they work alongside each other and against each other; the divorce psychology that has always accompanied their relations speaks to a force of habit that is stronger than loathing.

Peres left that meeting smiling. He related how Leah offered coffee and added jokingly: "The fact that I am still alive testifies to the fact that she did not even put poison in it." But it was not Leah's coffee that caused his good humor: Rabin made clear to him that he would get the foreign ministry portfolio without restrictions.

The new government tracked their behavior with a magnifying glass. Labor was fearful of a rivalry that would lead to tragedy: past arguments had always hurt them both, but mainly had crushed the party. Still, it seemed that the two of them had decided this time—and nobody could count any more which time it was—to turn a new leaf. Rabin established the practice of a regular discussion for his foreign minister: Once a week the two of them meet one-on-one for an hour on Friday in the Prime Minister's office in Tel Aviv or Saturday morning at Rabin's home. There are no leaks from those conversations.

In a session of the forum "Our Ministers," the ministers raised their brow more than once when they heard Rabin turn to Peres on some matter or other and say: "Shim'on, on this paragraph it is the way we agreed; Shim'on, look, we already finished with that, it is exactly what we talked about." Rabin, who by his very nature assumes a stance of perpetual suspicion, recognizes Peres's seniority in the political and defense realm and decided he would rather be advised by someone with that kind of experience than by the other ministers, most of whom are tyros in government.

Peres got the multilateral talks as part of his responsibilities. "That will be his lever to steal the show," they whispered into Rabin's ear, and he replied: "I want to see it."

Not much time went by before he did see it.

Rabin Ate Crow

Rabin sat in an El-Al plane bringing him back from an official visit to Germany when the morning papers were placed on his table. He put on his glasses and his face went from scarlet to purple. Peres was in Europe at the time, and the headlines he was making caused Rabin a lot of sweat.

The French, who were looking for an opportunity to get on the Middle East peace bandwagon, lavished Peres with warmth, love, and the royal treatment, and he opened the negotiating door to them. Mitterand, Peres's good friend, was portrayed as someone preparing to

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leave on a mission of mediation between Israel and the Arab states; the French Foreign Minister Dumas, it was reported, was already on his way to a meeting with al-Asad as Peres's emissary.

When Rabin landed at Ben-Gurion airport it was reported to him that the Americans were turning up their noses. They do not want the French in the negotiations, nor Europe. Rabin, who in the past had always said that "the French are the biggest jerks," stood before the microphones at the airport and spoke, as if for American ears and for Syrian ears, but it was really for Peres. "The negotiations between Israel and Syria will be conducted only between the delegations in Washington," he said, as his face convulsed in a spasm of anger. "All the rest is baloney."

In private conversations Rabin expressed himself more sharply. "Fire him," one of his confidants told him on that occasion, "Peres fired Moda'i for less than that." But Rabin decided to move on to the agenda. His office put out an announcement that the delegations would be briefed before leaving for Washington, and thus Rabin sought to give Peres the hint that he, Rabin, was the boss.

Peres' office went into damage control mode. First they issued a denial that Peres was the one who sent Dumas to Syria. Later they put out a different version. Peres, so it was claimed, told Dumas: "It is important that someone who is friendly to the Arabs tell them that they, too, have to make concessions." Dumas took the initiative, blew the matter out of proportion for the sake of French interest in involvement in the process and thus stirred up a tempest. To this day Peres's office claims that Peres intended for Dumas to persuade the Arabs to make concessions on everything having to do with the multi-lateral issue, which was within his sphere of responsibility, and nothing more than that.

Rabin, as expected, ate crow. Peres made it up to him. When Rabin made his unforgettable statement: "Better that Gaza should sink into the sea" and got it from the left and the media, it was Peres who rushed to his aid and said: "I am sure the Prime Minister was only joking." He was, by the way, the only minister at the time to come to Rabin's defense.

After the goings-on between Peres and the French, there was the Ron 'Arad affair. In his meeting with the press in New York, Peres revealed that the Lebanese had given him signs that Ron 'Arad was alive. The news was published and Rabin hit the ceiling. "How could he do something like that," he yelled, "it is tremendously damaging." In Rabin's office they said that was a crushing failure on the part of Peres. In Peres's office they confessed that those things should not have been said, but that perhaps it was for the better. Now the Lebanese had a public obligation.

Limits of Strength

While Rabin may have been willing to be convinced that Peres's pronouncement in New York was a slip and no

more than that, on the issue of negotiations with the Syrians he is unwilling to make any compromises with the Foreign Minister. "Where does he get all this euphoria from?" Rabin asked this week.

Rabin is convinced that in a certain sense the negotiations with the Syrians have reached a dead end and only some kind of dramatic event might bring about a breakthrough. That is why he is sending al-Asad a big signal. Rabin's assessment is based on both intelligence data and open sources, to which Peres also has access. They both get the same telegrams and the same reports from 'Aman. They talk with the same people. What Rabin knows, Peres also knows. From that same base of facts, Peres sends up fireworks while Rabin describes the developments drily, suspiciously, haltingly.

Those who know them well claim that these are personality differences. But not just that. Peres's pronouncements on the Syrian issue put him in the spotlight. He is part of the game. This wheel, as his confidants put it, will not spin fast without him. Shim'on Peres is building strength.

A party power struggle is now going on in the background: the election of the secretary. Yitzhaq Rabin has a candidate—Yuval Frenkel. His office manager, Shim'on Shabbes, is working for him. Peres will not support Frenkel. He is running Nissim Zawili and is working for him in every way.

Even if all sides try to present this contest as divorced from inner party politics, that is clearly an optical illusion. Rabin and Peres in fact are not dirtying their hands in this contest, and thus far have not expressed their support in public for their candidate, but their surrogates are struggling hard out in the field. Rabin could not bear having one of Peres's people control the party; Peres, in turn, will do everything to show Rabin that he is indeed number one, but that does not mean that he himself does not have a power base in the party.

Next month the secretary will be elected, and then each of them will take stock and draw the boundaries of power. It can be assumed that Rabin and Peres will not argue over Yuval Frenkel nor over Zawili; but on the political issue, the more the peace issue with Syria heats up, the more their level of tension will rise. Every time Rabin stops to think things over, Shim'on Peres will get up and try to pull forward. In professional parlance they call this a collision course. Will Rabin and Peres be able to avoid it?

Withdrawal From Yamit, Golan Heights Compared

93AE0019B Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 20 Sep 92
p B2

[Article by Revital Brakha]

[Text] Residents of the Golan Heights lately have been asked quite frequently whether the sights of the

evacuation of Yamit will recur. Their answer, usually, is no. We shall not stand at the barricades, the residents reckon, and will not fortify ourselves in bunkers as happened at Yamit, even if we have to return the Golan. The reasons, they say, are both the high proportion of Labor Party supporters among the settlers and the fact that they are farmers and not political activists.

During the period when negotiations with Egypt began, the residents of Yamit were also repeatedly asked what would happen if the government of Israel decided despite everything to return the Sinai. There will not be demonstrations, the residents answered in December 1977, four years before they dug themselves into the city and set fire to apartments and cars as a sign of protest. If there is really to be peace, why should we demonstrate? Peace will make this a Garden of Eden.

But it is clear that the reactions of the leaders of the settlers on the Golan Heights today, perhaps because of the precedent set by Yamit, are quicker and sharper than those that characterized the settlement leaders in the Sinai. The sharpest expression then directed at the Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, by a Gush Emunim leader of the time, Hanan Porat, was, "The settlers will break Mr. Begin" (a remark for which he later apologized and which he simultaneously denied). By contrast, even at this early stage of the negotiations with Syria, two leaders of the Golan Heights Council have stated that "What Rabin is doing at this time is an obsession bordering on insanity" and "Rabin is a colossal failure. What obtuseness. What has come over him?"

Like the residents of Yamit in their time, the residents of the Golan today argue that it is difficult for them to believe that the land will really be given back. While the inhabitants of Yamit had difficulty believing this until after the signing of the Camp David accords, however, the residents of the Golan Heights seem more attuned to every shift. In September 1991, for example, settlers met to discuss how to prevent the Madrid Conference, which was to convene the next month, from becoming Camp David 2. Earlier this year, on 16 July, an attempt was made to revive the Golan Heights lobby in the Knesset.

That same month, Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin told American Secretary of State James Baker that Israel would be willing to discuss a territorial compromise on the Golan if Syria's president were to announce his readiness to enter into a peace agreement with Israel. Golan residents reacted to this statement with outrage even as they emphasized that they were not surprised. "I cannot understand how Rabin, after so short a time in office, is conceding so large a territory," said Meir Munitz, deputy chairman of the Qatzrin Council. "Rabin's centimeter has already become a kilometer." Worried residents sought to stake a protest vigil across from the Prime Minister's office.

Even before the elections, Golan residents were on edge. On 1 June, the Golan Heights Settlements Council invited Rabin to take part in a large rally held to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Six Day War. That same weekend, Rabin announced in a newspaper interview that he was prepared to come to a territorial compromise on the Golan Heights. This pronouncement took many Golan residents by surprise. They appealed to Eli Malkah, chairman of the Settlements Council. "It is inconceivable," said one of them, "that Rabin would bless the Golan residents on the one hand and, on the other, announce in the media that he is actually ready to clear us out of here."

Despite this, however, on the question whether they believe that the Golan Heights will be given back, the residents give the same answer heard from Yamit's inhabitants in 1977. "Nothing will be moved," Uri Me'ir, chairman of the Golan Development Council, said at the start of the month. "I am relying a little on intuition and a little on logic. It is not a matter of a centimeter here or there. There simply is no room for compromise...and I am very realistic."

The inhabitants of Yamit, too, radiated optimism. "In the event of peace, it will bring with it large investments by financiers from the Gaza Strip. They will put their money in Yamit and the city will thrive as a border town on the road to Cairo."

During the period of discussions on the possibility of returning Sinai, the arguments of the Yamit region residents were primarily emotional and nationalistic; only later were they expanded to include a contention that the territory was vital to national security. The criticism directed at Menachem Begin's government at that time, however, was more moderate than that which the Golan residents are heaping on the Rabin government today.

In January, 1978, Yamit region residents called for the creation of facts on the ground. "The Israeli public must be aware of the fact that the Israeli Government's peace plan contains an offer to hand over Israeli settlements to Egyptian jurisdiction," Yosi Mas, chairman of the action committee, said at the time. "Divestment of Israeli sovereignty over a region in which a noble national project has been undertaken deals a death blow to national enterprises, the principle of dispersal of population, ideals to which the state of Israel has devoted itself and faith in the Government of Israel."

Of the Rabin government, by contrast, Yehuda Wellman, chairman of the Golan Settlements Council, said this month that "This government is a total failure. It is antisettlements and anti-Zionist. I intend to conduct a real war against the intention to return territory on the Golan." Wellman contended further that Rabin's staff "is putting pressure on me, but my safety will not be undermined. Rabin will not succeed in hurting us through these means. This is deceptive leadership."

Even harsher statements have come from Shmu'el Mandel, a member of Kibbutz Merom Golan. "There will be citizen's uprising here. Residents of the Golan come to me and say, 'We are committing suicide, we are taking up arms.' I tell them, 'Calm down, there are other ways to fight this government.' Rabin lied when he said he would not do anything to harm the Golan settlements. Now he is lying again. We no longer believe him. Every centimeter returned here just brings war closer."

While residents of the Golan are making such declarations right at the start of negotiations with Syria, the substance of the reactions of Yamit's inhabitants appears to have been dictated by the course of the political negotiations. In June 1978, when the negotiations with Egypt reached a dead end, the residents were apathetic. Reports stated then that the settlers, including both Herut supporters and their opponents, did not believe that Begin intended to stand behind his promise to Sadat to return all territories beyond the international border in Sinai. It was commonly believed then that when all was said and done, the settlers would not be removed. Most of them did not even think that they would have to live under Egyptian jurisdiction, a possibility often raised there. There were those, however, who said: If there will be true peace, it does not matter to us whether or not we live under Israeli control. According to a survey done at the time, 78 percent of the residents had no plans for abandoning Yamit.

Even the Camp David conference, held in September 1978, did not arouse much excitement in Sinai. A poll conducted one week after announcement of the date of the three-way summit between Begin, Anwar al-Sadat and its sponsor, American President Jimmy Carter, revealed that most of the Israeli public did not have great expectations of the meeting. Immediately after signing of the agreement in March 1979, organization of protest activities did indeed begin, but even they were low-key. Only 500 people showed up for one of the protest demonstrations, far below the thousands expected by its organizers. Public opinion did not seem to be with the rejectionists, whose proclamations were, accordingly, phrased in delicate terms. "Woe unto us if we arrive at a national consensus for tearing down settlements," one of them said. "We must do everything possible so that today's minority (those opposing the evacuation) becomes the majority."

The residents of Yamit itself were divided into two camps on this issue. Some argued that the city had to be evacuated to prevent war while the others contended that Yamit had to be held in order not to cause another war. "Please, do not describe us as foes of peace; to assure a lasting peace, we must remain here forever," they asserted, and branded the accords as buying peace at any price. Those opposed to evacuation did not succeed in winning public opinion in Israel to their side. People across the country, one of them said, ask us why we are hounding Begin.

Even so, by April 1979, protests by the residents of Yamit had begun to take a violent turn. In one of the incidents, the city was shut down for three hours, during which patrols prevented people from entering or leaving. City residents blocked traffic for 12 hours, government offices in Ofira were defaced, and posters were painted with slogans such as "The turncoat state." The police did not arrest anyone. Prime Minister Begin, who visited Yamit at the request of the residents, was greeted with calls of "Go home," "Double-crosser," and "You sold us out." Begin told the residents that he had no other choice; electricity in the city was cut off as a sign of protest.

Just one month later, however, the discussion changed from the question of whether it was necessary to abandon the city to determination of the proper level of compensation. The settlers demanded that the government pay them a sum equal in value to a fancy apartment and offer a grant equal to 14 years' worth of wages. Much of the public accused them of greed.

Right up until the evacuation, the residents continued their activities. They organized another strike of the city and called on Begin to resign in the many demonstrations they held. Some of them threatened bloodshed, set fire to apartments, stuck yellow patches on their clothes, hurled the epithet "Nazis" at IDF [Israel Defense Forces] soldiers, fortified themselves in their houses and declared autonomy. The most extreme dug themselves into bunkers.

At the same time, some predicted that surrendering Sinai was liable to exact a heavy price from Menachem Begin, drive his party from power and induce Likud supporters to switch to parties further to the right, such as Tehiya. This prediction, however, was not realized. Even in the heat of the struggle, Tehiya's strength did not rise; Begin's grip on his position remained firm; the Likud did not lose supporters, so it seems, even during those days when television broadcast scenes of the razing of Yamit. The whole affair seemed over and forgotten as soon as compensation was arranged.

About a month after the evacuation, Amnon Rubinstein (then a member of the Knesset [and now Energy Minister]) wrote an article for "HA'ARETZ" under the heading, "Was it a Trauma?" "Whoever has followed the pull-back from Sinai and public reaction to giving it up," wrote Rubinstein, among other things, "can see that, contrary to all the predictions and expectations, public opinion has reconciled itself with supreme ease to what was described only a short while ago as a national trauma."

Weapons Distribution to Citizens Investigated

93AE0045C Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew
9 Oct 92 p 7

[Article by Re'uven Shapira: "Senior Team in Police Operations Branch To Examine Standards for Weapons Distribution to the Citizenry"]

[Text] The police command is worried about the fact that thousands of people are regularly getting weapons and ammunition from the police, without the police being able to check carefully enough if they meet the accepted standards for the distribution of weapons to the citizenry.

This is a question of civilian police volunteers, citizens who escort tours—in general, school tours throughout Israel—and civilian police employees. With regard to most of these people, the police do not have certified information as to the degree of their fitness for bearing arms, how reliably they can use them or any weapons training they might have had. Civilian police volunteers do, certainly, go to the ranges, but only infrequently.

The essence of the problem is with thousands of school tour escorts who receive weapons from the police on the recommendation of the teachers. It is a question of parents, brothers, and sometimes family members of the students.

The check that is carried out by the police before handing out weapons and ammunition is superficial. They check to see if they have a criminal record and ask them about their reserve service and their degree of skill in operating the weapon; however they do not check most of these details officially but simply rely on the declaration and signature of those getting the weapon.

The police are aware of the problem and are very troubled by it, especially after the bloody incident in Jerusalem a few weeks ago in which 'Eitan Mor, a guard company employee, shot and killed four women with a weapon he had gotten from the guard company he worked for.

Lately discussions have been held on the issue by senior police echelons, and it was discussed in the sessions of the senior command corps.

Weapons Can Be Used for Bad Ends

Senior police officers have raised the fear that civilians who receive weapons and ammunition from the police to escort tours, as required by regulations, can use the weapons for bad ends; the police do not have sufficient means of controlling and checking to locate problematic weapons recipients in time, since they do not go through the same check process as candidates for a weapons permit from the Ministry of the Interior.

This means that they do not check the medical and psychological health of tour escorts or their past. Likewise there is insufficient information for "classic" civilian guard volunteers (those who get weapons for security patrols in the streets of the settlements).

It is estimated that today we are talking about approximately 30,000 such volunteers, each of whom does occasional armed tour duty.

In recent years there have been a number of incidents in which civilian guard volunteers used the weapons that they got for bad ends—among other things, they fired without justification and wounded themselves or others during violent arguments.

A civilian who requests a private weapons permit has his request checked by the police to find out if he has a criminal record or if there is any intelligence information about criminal activity. His case is also checked by the Ministry of Health to find out if he was ever hospitalized for psychiatric reasons.

As to police who are accepted into the police force or who volunteer for the special units of the civilian guard, other aspects are checked before they are authorized to carry weapons.

Besides the check for a criminal record, intelligence information, details of IDF service and the health situation, their fitness to handle a weapon is also checked; and, when necessary, they receive special training.

The Team Will Recommend

Given the severity of the fears, the senior team of the police operational branch has been tasked with checking into the matter and the overall treatment by the police of the issues involved in the distribution of weapons to civilians. The team has been asked to pass along its finding and recommendations to the police command as soon as possible.

It seems that the team will recommend significant restrictions and changes in the area of weapons distribution by the police to various bodies, and will establish means for increasing supervision and control in this area. The police team is operating separately from the interministerial check committee headed by chief fire-fighting inspector Shlomo Cohen, that has, for several weeks, been looking into the overall topic of weapons registration in the country and its supervision.

IDF 'Qualitative Superiority' Questioned

*93AE0019C Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 2 Oct 92
p B1*

[Article by Ze'ev Schiff]

[Text] Newspapers the eve of the holiday brimmed with bold headlines of substantial quantities of arms that President Bush is supplying Israel as compensation for the sale of advanced F-15 jets to Saudi Arabia. Highlighted were Apache and Blackhawk combat helicopters. That is a nice gift, but no cause for whooping it up. It provides no direct answer to the problem created by the sale of 72 F-15's with improved capabilities for attacking ground targets. Indeed, it is not the route that Israel needs to take to maintain the gap in quality between her and her enemies. Air Force Commander in Chief General Herzl Budinger has already stated in an interview that "additional planes and equipment might put a drag on their operation and funding of routine activities."

No American administration has failed to speak about the need to ensure Israel's qualitative superiority. All of them talk about it, but they do little to keep their promises. It is not an empty slogan, but it certainly is one only half full, and not all the time even at that. We make it easier for the Americans to pervert the principle of superiority by concentrating our thinking on how to save money and obtain more of the equipment we already have rather than on the sophisticated aspects of qualitative superiority.

In private, Americans are prepared to admit that our qualitative superiority will indeed be eroded but, so the argument goes, the erosion is only in the sale of platforms. These platforms—like F-15 jets with operational capabilities exceeding those of previous F-15's and F-16's, the MiG-29 and the Sukhoi-22—are not just trucks. Even if some of the systems sold are stripped down, they confer on the Arabs a penetration capability they have never had before, the possibility of reaching targets in short flights and hitting them accurately. Thus, there is good reason for the concern now felt in the IDF [Israel Defense Forces].

The Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University recently published an interesting study by Dore Gold of American policy re Israel's qualitative superiority. Gold, too, comes to the conclusion that this advantage has begun to shrink, and emphasizes that the decline has been greater during the years of the Bush administration than during previous administrations. He argues that Saudi Arabia has practically been excluded from American calculations of the states liable to present a threat to Israel.

Israel's doctrine of deterrence was built in the past on the premise that we would receive modern weapon systems some years before the Arabs got something similar or equivalent. This doctrine applied with special significance to the Air Force. After the peace treaty with Egypt, the Arabs began receiving almost exactly what Israel was

getting. Apache helicopters and Patriot missiles are examples. With delivery of the new version of the F-15 jet to Saudi Arabia, a third stage has started, in which some Arab states receive sophisticated equipment even before Israel does. Before that, they were given modern MLRS [Multiple Launch Rocket Systems] rocket launchers that the IDF still has been unable to acquire.

No wonder there is often a reluctance in Israel to request advanced weapons systems and equipment for fear that the Arabs will get them immediately after we do, so that we shall find that we have actually done ourselves harm. Therefore, if qualitative superiority is part of Israel's doctrine of deterrence, it is clear that deterrence is sapped by the sale of modern arms to the Arabs.

Since the end of the Gulf War, this development has taken a turn for the worse. The pressures on arms sellers today are greater than the demand from buyers. The Arabs were exposed in the Gulf to the meaning of modern war; they also know what to request and are demanding a lot. The Americans are responding to us, as they have in the past, with assurances that Israel has much better troops, training, and command and control systems than the Arabs do. That is a cynical reply, for the Americans are stripping down some of the weapons systems and equipment sold to Israel. In general, they do not initiate transfers of modern technology [to us] except when it is clear to them that Israel already has begun to develop it herself.

This cynicism takes yet another form. Not only are the Americans selling modern arms [to the Arabs], they are training some of their armies. Small wonder that Israel fears that operational techniques of IDF training with the Americans will leak to the Arab armies. It is for that reason that we do not desire joint training in every sphere.

The debate with the Americans over qualitative superiority cannot be reduced to a single transaction between them and the Arabs. There is a need for new and clearer definitions of just what constitutes the qualitative superiority that Israel needs. General formulas and talk about preserving Israel's military power are insufficient. If we break down the concept of quality, we find components such as the ability to prevent an enemy from taking Israel by surprise, which means an improvement in intelligence. Part and parcel is an improvement in the ability to surprise the enemy on the battlefield and to win without sustaining heavy casualties. At the top of the list stands the need to preserve air supremacy, but it must not be forgotten that ground forces suffer most of the losses in war.

The Americans cannot supply us with everything, nor do they wish to. Consider, for example, the means for surprising the enemy on the battlefield. They apparently will refuse to develop an Israeli satellite. Apart from that, Israel's qualitative superiority requires the ability to

react quickly to innovations on the Arab side. In other words: Do not wait until American industry supplies what is needed.

What this means is that it is Israel's responsibility to preserve the quality of her defense industries rather than looking at everything in terms of immediate business. This is all the more true when there is a rising tendency in America to weaken Israeli industries so as to restrict their ability to compete. It is easy to convince the Americans that the primary goal is not to produce weapons but to ensure our qualitative superiority. The possibility of drawing this distinction will allow the Americans to meet us halfway.

Nuclear Arms Control, IDF Qualitative Edge

93AE0045B Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew
14 Oct 92 p B1

[Article by 'Aluf Ben: "Maintaining the Qualitative Advantage"]

[Text] Yitzhaq Rabin gave the green light to the American Government for the sale of 72 advanced F-15's to Saudi Arabia, according to Assistant Secretary of State Edward Georgian in a discussion of the deal in Congress. Georgian claimed that the meeting of the Israeli prime minister and the President of the United States, George Bush, in Kennebunkport was conclusive in the decision-making process for the deal.

The results of Rabin's visit to the United States show that he chose to focus on a renewal of the American obligation to preserve Israel's qualitative advantage and on getting fair compensation from the government instead of trying to manage a hopeless struggle against a weapons deal that will support 40,000 jobs in the United States and that enjoys the support of both presidential candidates.

The gift that Israel got from the United States—tens of helicopters and the promise in principle to reveal sensitive military technology—is not a fair exchange for the attack capability of the F-15's. But the defense establishment believes that the strengthening Saudi army is not Israel's main threat.

Rabin sees the nuclear arming of the Middle East states as the principal danger. That is a threat to the very existence of the country, and every effort must be made to prevent it; but, above all, there must be a reliable deterrent capability. Rabin hinted at the importance of deterrence in his inauguration speech to the Knesset in which he said that Israel "has already been poised for a long time" to deal with the nuclear danger.

Under the Israeli concept, a deterrent ability that gives Israel the nuclear capability attributed to her is the "qualitative advantage" that compensates for her enormous quantitative disadvantage with respect to the Arab world. In the next four years the prime minister and defense minister will have to concentrate their best

efforts and political savvy on preserving that advantage, hand in hand with progress on the peace agreements and the fashioning of Israel's new position in the Middle East.

Rabin believes that relations with the United States are particularly important in confronting the threat to her existence: Israel cannot by herself neutralize the pretensions of countries distant from her to nonconventional capability and needs active American support, as happened in Iraq.

An understanding with the United States is vital, as well, in preserving Israel's deterrent capability, and Rabin knows that well. When he was appointed ambassador to the United States in 1968, the nuclear reactor in Dimona was the main obstacle between Washington and Jerusalem. The confrontation reached its peak that year, against the background of the request by the government of Lyndon Johnson that Israel sign the nuclear nonproliferation treaty as a precondition for acquiring Phantom jets. Israel refused to sign; her assurance that she would not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East did not satisfy government officials.

In his contacts with American officialdom, Rabin explained (according to the book by William Quandt, a former White House staffer) the Israeli position as follows: not to be the first to test nuclear weapons in the region and not to reveal their existence in public. President Richard Nixon's willingness to adopt the Rabin formula in 1969 removed the nuclear obstacle from relations between the two countries. All subsequent governments in Washington and Jerusalem have strictly maintained that understanding.

The Bush administration, too, during its sharp confrontation with the Shamir government, did not try to upset this delicate issue. On the contrary, Bush's arms control initiative in the Middle East speaks of freezing the manufacture of fissionable material for nuclear weapons and giving a clear preference to those who have already produced and maintain such materials. The only country in the region to whom foreign sources attribute the capability of manufacturing enriched plutonium and uranium is Israel.

In international fora the United States supported the Israeli position that calls for the demilitarization of the region of nuclear weapons only at the time and in the context of peace agreements. With American support, proposals by Egypt have thus far been blocked that call for dismantling of weapons of mass destruction and the immediate imposition of nuclear supervision, unconnected to progress in the peace process.

U.S. support has lent legitimacy to Israel's nuclear policy, and at the last conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Israel achieved two important victories. The paragraph condemning her nuclear activity was stricken from the agenda, and the report composed by the Agency's general manager in practice recognizes the Israeli stance and rejects to proposal to set

up a model right now for nuclear supervision in the region. American officials duck when asked if the qualitative advantage also includes Israel's nuclear capability. In Israel there are many who are suspicious of the American position and believe that it augurs no good: It did not give up, in their view, on the desire to dismantle Israel's deterrent weapons, but prefers to first take the territories away from her.

In the coming years Rabin will face difficult challenges on the way to a renewed establishment of understanding with the United States in the nuclear arena. In 1995 the nuclear nonproliferation treaty will expire, and Bush has already called for its unlimited renewal. The discussions concerning this treaty will almost certainly lead to a renewed campaign of pressure on the few countries that have not joined.

Bill Clinton's likely victory in the presidential elections invites no less of a challenge: In the past, Democrat presidents tended to support nuclear demilitarization much more than the Republicans. It is not clear, for example, what the position of a Clinton administration would be toward legislation coming up in Congress that calls for sanctions on countries that take various actions in the nuclear area. Israel has been left almost unaffected by existing nuclear legislation in the United States, and the new initiatives arouse concern; Israeli officials have already been sent for quiet contacts in Congress. The Bush administration has made clear that it does not support the legislation being put together, but a new administration might bring a new approach that would require Israel to deal with it.

Political Trends in IDF Explored

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[Article by 'Ari'ela Ringel-Hofman: "The Moment Dan Shomron Threatened To Resign"]

[Text] Chief of Staff Dan Shomron kept his cool. The government session conducted in the shadow of the worsening rioting on the West Bank was particularly stormy. The intifadah was pushing the army to the wall and there were those in the government who believed that things were getting completely out of control. Those taking a very sharp tone were Yitzhaq Rabin, the Minister of Defense, who believed that a heavy hand would solve the problem within months; Moshe 'Arens, the Foreign Minister, who was getting harsh criticism from all over the world; and Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir, who saw the intifadah as another plot to annihilate Israel. On the right, breathing down their necks, were the "Spokes" [of the Likud "wheel," Shamir being the axle—a reference to the mystical passage on chariots in the Book of Ezekiel]—'Ari'el Sharon, Yitzhaq Moda'i and David Levi. At that same meeting the demand was raised—later on Sharon was its most salient proponent—to instruct the army to eliminate the intifadah.

Then, in his quiet manner, Shomron got permission to speak. "The government," he said, "certainly has the authority to make such a decision, and if it does so, the army will have to carry it out. But I will not be a partner to carrying out the decision, and it will be done without me." In other words: if you take such a decision, I will shed my uniform and go home.

Those words by Shomron, or, if you prefer, that threat—and he repeated it in his private one-on-one discussion with Shamir—was left hanging in the session room. Without going into the question of how often, there is no doubt that he also faced down the decision-makers in all those instances in which passions were stirred around the table and voices were raised on the question of Jewish blood that was squandered.

"Any action contrary to the code of behavior of Israeli society," Shomron said at the time, "would cause a rift in Israeli society, would cause a rift within the army itself. Any action must be taken in very precise dosages, and deal, point-wise, with the terror foci." And he also said: "In the territories the military regime is the government, and, by force of law, we cannot declare war on our citizens. We can fight terror, and that we will do."

The Prime Minister concluded the session without bringing the issue to a vote. The government, he said, accepts the Chief of Staff's policy and *modus operandi*.

Some months later, one of the people interviewed for this article related that Shomron left a particularly difficult conversation with the Prime Minister. When he was asked what went on there, he said Shamir demanded that the army take all measures to stop the intifadah. And I, added Shomron, will do what I understand I have to do.

Shomron says today that he does not remember such a conversation: "I felt that some of the ministers were heavily pressuring the Prime Minister, but I do not remember that he put the matter that way."

Back to that government session: Shomron said what he said at the time in very measured tones. But it was not a theoretical discussion that was on the agenda. "Had that happened in any other army, the Chief of Staff would have been gone immediately," says Dr. Yoram Pri, the editor of DAVAR and the author of the book *Between the Battles and the Ballot Boxes—the IDF/[Israel Defense Forces] and the Political System*.

And why did it not happen here?

Pri: "Because some of the ministers understood that he was right. Some of them did not agree with him but felt there was no alternative. Some others knew and agreed that we had to act within the rules of the game, to reconcile ourselves to the fiction that the IDF was not involved in politics and that politics did not play a role in the IDF."

A political mapping of retired Chiefs of Staff over the last four decades shows that the political orientation of

the military elite has not changed during those years, and that the changes that were begun during the 15 years of Likud were insignificant.

Were the Knesset to be formed according to the voting preferences of the senior officers from Colonel on up, the Labor party would get about 80 seats, Meretz about 20, and the right-wing parties about 15. The Orthodox, almost certainly, would not garner the qualifying percentage.

Giora Forman, a pilot and Brigadier General in the reserves, today the secretary of the National Kibbutz, who conducted a survey of the political opinions of the senior officers before the elections, agrees with that estimate.

Pa'il [sic] and Forman may be exaggerating, but there is an unequivocal answer to the question as to what extent Likud succeeded in advancing people supportive of its positions in the upper echelons of the IDF: Likud failed. Yosi Sarid, a member of the Foreign Affairs and Defense committee, says: "In all the years of its reign Likud was unsuccessful in turning the General Staff into a chorus of yes sayers. In the same way, despite all its attempts and appointments, it was unsuccessful in taking control of the media, though I might say that the media withheld the politicization onslaught less well than the army."

Why did Likud fail in both instances?

"Because in both instances professional discipline and professional ethics prevented the military people from falling into the trap of the politicians around them. Likud, with a considerable measure of common sense, did not want it hard enough, and the senior officers understood that blindly charging like a rhinoceros would cause a collapse from which there would be no recovery."

Nevertheless, within Likud, as within Labor, there was a system of perks and rebukes, of cordiality and rebuff, of one hand washing the other between the political echelon and the senior command. In the intimacy that characterizes military-political-media relations in Israel today, says a member of the Foreign Affairs and Defense committees, the boundaries were breached long ago. Every member of the General Staff and everyone who wants to be a member of the General Staff will find in some Tel Aviv or Jerusalem salon, or on a lawn in Savyon or Kokhav Ya'ir, his media channel to Israeli politics.

One of the members of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee related how he was very confused, to say the least, to find New Year's greeting cards in his mailbox from senior officers who were not exactly regulars in his home. The same person said that appointment rotations, like times of emergency, accelerate the cultivation of connections. This is really a phenomenon of the last few years, he says.

Sometimes the connection is intended to advance a personal interest. In other instances each side prepares the required lobby in order to advance a substantive issue. During the time of the Gulf War, a senior army man related, he found himself more than once in an almost surrealistic situation, dealing with a government, most of whose ministers not only had not done any real service in the military, but a large majority of whom had not the slightest understanding of what was being discussed. Yitzhaq Shamir would take a quick snooze, other ministers would gape at the slides being shown them and, except for an isolated few, displayed amazing ignorance. In that kind of situation, he says, I had to organize a lobby before the sessions had even begun, and it had nothing to do with my world political outlook.

In the 50's and 60's, says Me'ir Pa'il, the composition of the General Staff generally reflected the strength of the parties in Israeli politics, and no small portion of the appointments were political. In this matter, he says, the traditional Mapai [Israel Workers' Party] was rather contemptible.

When Pa'il was still a young officer in the army, Moshe Dayan could permit himself to ask him if he had left Mapam [United Workers' Party] with Moshe Sneh. The answer could decide an entire career. But when an army officer identified with the left turned to Ya'akov Hazan in the waiting period before the Six Day War and suggested meeting with him because he thought "someone is selling you noodles [i.e., the Brooklyn bridge]," Hazan told him he would meet with him only through established army channels.

Brutal politicization ended more or less in the mid 60's. Appointments or dismissals carried out after that time that were not based on talent, they say in the army, were done on the basis of personal ties, not political ones. For example, Moshe Levi was a Chief of Staff who was not susceptible to political appeals, but was a known cliquist. In the last months of his tenure, before Dan Shomron came on board, he implemented a whole series of hasty appointments: Yitzhaq Mordekhai, 'Amnon Shahaq, Doron Rubin—all of them comrades in arms.

'Ari'el Sharon, as Defense Minister, did not give the rank of Maj GEN to Dov Tamri, a talented officer by all accounts, because of a personal crisis of confidence; and for the same reason Natan Sharoni, head of the Planning Branch, had to resign. But when Dan Shomron, still a Maj Gen, met with him to look into the possibilities open to him, Sharon said he saw him as the next Chief of Staff. "I do not think that we see eye to eye on things," Shomron told him. Sharon responded that he was not looking for a political Chief of Staff.

When 'Avi'ezer Ya'ari, a General in the reserves, the head of research in 'Aman, asked Moshe 'Arens if there was anything to prevent him being the head of 'Aman, 'Arens responded that, in his opinion, there were only

two jobs that had political connotations—the Prime Minister's military secretary and the Defense Minister's military secretary.

Until 1977 the upper echelons of the General Staff felt at home in government sessions. The political cordiality created an identity of thought processes and a large degree of confidence. Except for a brief episode of lack of confidence on the eve of the Six Day War, the military never resisted any political blow. During the 15 years of the Likud regime, a deep gap opened for the first time between the military upper echelon and the government. The military elite found itself very distant from the ideological positions represented by the right. The regime found itself struggling to capture a position of additional strength. On the surface, we were facing a war of Gog and Magog. In practice, the conflicts were a lot less serious than might be imagined.

We are talking about a large, conformist army composed of cliques and camps. Such an army, says Me'ir Pa'il, for better or for worse, will do what the leadership asks it to do—within reason. It is an army that took Lebanon and also evacuated Yamit. It would fight the intifadah and, if necessary, would evacuate the West Bank. It is an army without fanatics that was educated to be that way.

The following two stories, among others, tell us something about conformity in the military: In the war game "Shoshanim" that was conducted before the Lebanon War, with the participation of Sharon and 'Eitan, the officers came out against the philosophy presented during its course. Because of the criticism, no wrap-up was held and the game was not completed. The results of the simulation of the Lebanon War, which were known in the General Staff, did not result in consolidation of a clear General Staff position against the war. Such a position was not presented in the government either. The army went to war with a large degree of enthusiasm, and only in the second stage did reservations begin to sprout up. The Lebanon War, says Yosi Sarid, was, from this point of view, a failure of the military, which did not get up and point to a possible entanglement.

An opposite example: For 15 months there has been a clear assessment in the army of a change in political policy among the Syrians. That assessment has constantly been brought to the attention of the policy makers, despite the fact that the army knew the government was interested in hearing otherwise. The assessment is that the president of Syria, Hafiz al-Asad, has made a clear political turn and now wants a peace agreement.

"In my estimation," says an old member of the Foreign Affairs and Defense committee, "this is the first time there has been such a controversial IDF assessment that contradicts the opinion of the Defense Minister." In the Likud Government they read the assessment and laid it aside. For the purposes of negotiation they needed

somewhat different assessments. Despite the rebuff, the IDF continues to try and persuade people of the reliability of its conclusions.

In recent years the military made the assessment that it would be very difficult to advance the political process without the PLO. That kind of assessment also contradicted what the government wanted to hear.

A member of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee: "It is clear that whoever supplied the government the merchandise would advance, but the system did not accept the dictates. The generals, and especially 'Aman, went all the way with their assessments. During the course of the intifadah, intelligence claimed that it was a new phenomenon that could not be handled with the old tools. Even when the Prime Minister hinted they would get full backing, the generals in question stood their ground, including Chief of Staff Shomron, who specifically did not want to take steps that were not acceptable to him."

The channels of communication between the politicians and the generals have always existed. Rafa'el 'Eitan admitted that during his tenure he authorized eavesdropping on the General Staff in order to stop undesirable leaks. Such leaks often created events that put the military in a ridiculous light.

When the Israeli government under Menahem Begin made the decision to attack the atomic reactor, the information leaked from the military to the heads of Labor at the time—Shim'on Peres and 'Ezer Weizmann. The two of them picked up the phone to Begin and the action was postponed. Suspicion fell on one of the generals who was not connected to the limited staff, just four generals, that was put together for the operation. When a new date was decided upon, even though the leak had not been explicitly attributed to him, that general was left out of the picture. He did not get the exact time for the attack.

Yo'el Lavi', a reserve Colonel and a former member of the Planning Branch, who worked on the issue within in the framework of the National Defense College, says, paradoxically, that it is actually in dictatorial regimes that there is a clear separation between the regime and the military echelon. Power in those regimes is held by the secret services, and they, among other things, are supposed to make sure the military does not gather too much strength.

In democratic regimes there are a number of behavioral models, that vary from a distinct mixing of areas to a clear separation. In the State of Israel, says Lavi', the ideal is a separation of areas. In reality there are many examples where the areas are blurred.

In the Yom Kippur War Ha'im Bar Lev, a minister in Golda Me'ir's government, was appointed commander of the southern front. In his commander hat, Bar-Lev was subordinate to the Chief of Staff, David 'El'azar. In

his government minister hat, he was among those who dictated government policy to the military echelon.

During the course of the war Moshe Dayan instructed Shmu'el Gonon, General of the Southern Command, to base his line of defense on the line of the passes. Gonon said that he took such orders only from the Chief of Staff. Later on Dayan turned it into a ministerial project.

Two years later, following the recommendations of the 'Agranat Commission, in 1976, the Basic Military Law was enacted, which was to define the areas of subordination between the military and political echelons, to prevent phenomena reminiscent of South American banana republics. But the law that was supposed to close the cracks apparently left some uncovered holes.

That same year a gang of terrorists trapped students in a school in Ma'alot. On the threshold of a break-in to the building, differences of opinion broke out between Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and Chief of Staff Mote Gur. The matter went before the government, and there the wonderful decision was made to have the Defense Minister and Chief of Staff together decide the timing of the break-in. The appointee and his subordinate were given equal standing.

But in reality that was not the last time that the behavioral norms of the politicians and the military deviated from the Basic Military law, says Lavi'. In the Lebanon War areas of authority and responsibilities were blurred. Sharon held daily meetings in the Northern Command with the officers, and more than a few officers remember him on the porch of one of the armor task forces in Hamadun, getting directly involved in operational briefings.

Yoram Pri: "With regard to the Lebanon War, the system of relationships between the Minister and the Chief of Staff was very complicated. It was a situation in which Sharon filled two positions. There were days when the Chief of Staff almost did not appear in government sessions and sessions of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. They related in the army back then how Sharon, during the course of the sessions, would draw the boundary line of the IDF advance with thick India ink, where the thickness of the line could sometimes amount to kilometers in the field."

That phenomenon was also repeated in the intifadah. Yitzhaq Rabin, as Defense Minister, more than once skipped over the Chief of Staff to give instructions directly to the field commanders. What Dan Shomron defines as guidelines to the military was interpreted in the field as a clear instruction, and the matter was brought up in officer testimony in the trials of the "anomalous episodes" during the course of the intifadah.

The Maydun action, the penetration of the terrorist stronghold beyond the security strip, was done against the policy of the Chief of Staff Dan Shomron, who dictated a policy of action within the security strip only.

The action was carried out on the initiative of Yosi Peled, General of the Northern Command, and with the authorization of Defense Minister Yitzhaq Rabin. It was rather confusing to hear the Chief of Staff, as he left the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, talking about an Army of South Lebanon action in Maydun, when a few minutes later Peled spoke of the success of IDF soldiers in the operation.

Not too long ago, British television reconstructed the role of the English in what we call Operation Qadesh (the Sinai Campaign). Dr. Pri, who followed the broadcast, says that what attracted his attention was the picture of the British officers leaving the session room. The officers entered, he says, explained what they had to explain, and when the discussion began, went outside. To an Israeli eye, says Pri, this seems strange.

In the State of Israel, says a senior minister, the Chief of Staff is an honored guest even in discussions affecting national insurance payments, unless he decides to get up and walk out.

That began more or less in the War of Attrition. The Chief of Staff at the time, Haim Bar-Lev, was invited with growing frequency to government sessions, and, in the final analysis, his reports from the Canal opened the weekly sessions.

David 'El'azar, who came after him, also participated in many of the sessions, and Mordekhai Gur, after him. In the first week of 'Ezer Weizmann's appointment as Defense Minister, Mordekhai Gur, the Chief of Staff, was not invited to a session. Gur thought it was a mistake. The discussion was not on a topic of concern to you, Weizmann said, and therefore you were not invited.

Weizmann's attempt to keep the Chief of Staff from regular sessions was of no use. And with Menahem Begin, about whose great love for officers much has already been written, two chairs were added to the table. One of them was for the government's legal advisor, and the other, for the Chief of Staff. The orderly would generally put the chair next to the Defense Minister, but not always. Dan Shomron, for example, sat between Refa'el Eytan and the Police Commander. And Ehud Baraq sits on a fixed chair between....

The Sunday sessions are opened with a report by the Chief of Staff. The decision on whether to stay for the discussions accompanying the report depends on the Chief of Staff, says one of the ministers; no one would tell him he has to leave. One of the former Chiefs of Staff who was interviewed for this article said that when things got heated, he would be sure to leave.

The IDF spokesman, by the way, consistent with his mission of strictly dissociating the military from controversial political questions, refused to participate in the preparation of this article.

Moshe Bar-Kokhba [Bril], says there has to be harmony between the military echelon and the regime. Success, he

says, depends on understanding, loyalty, mutual recognition and consideration of ability.

"There was no attempt to influence the military through appointments, and no pressure was applied to the military that could be defined as political," says Dan Shomron. "I never got into a situation of real conflict between the instructions I received and the way I thought they had to be implemented."

Even if Shomron is smoothing the edges a bit, and despite clear testimony of involvement by the politicians in the internal affairs of the military and vice versa, the IDF really does remain a nonpolitical army. True, most of the generals tend to the Labor camp, but despite that and regardless of that fact, the totality of all their actions, under ministers from Likud or Labor, points to professional considerations, adherence to the goal and loyalty to the route. There have always been and always will be rhinoceroses and sycophants. Thus far such officers have not made it to the most senior echelon.

The Red Army

Generals to the Left of Center

'Eden, Avraham 'Or, 'Uri 'Il, Shmu'el 'El'azar, David 'Efrat, Yonah 'Erez, Haim Butzer, Avraham Ben-David, Haim Ben-Nun, 'Avihu Ben-Nun, Yuhai Bengal, Yanush Bar-Lev, Haim Gavish, Yish'ayahu Geva', Yosef Gur, Mordekhai Gazit, Shlomo Drori, 'Amir Hod, Mordekhai Weizmann, 'Ezer Zamir, Tzvi Hofi, Yitzhaq Horev, 'Amos Ya'air, 'Avi'ezer Yaron, 'Amos Yariv, Aharon Levi, 'Arye Levi, Moshe Tal, Yisra'el Verdi, Refa'el Lapidot, Ya'aqov Lapidot, 'Amos Narkis, 'Uzi Netiv, Moshe 'Ivri, David 'Inan, Menahem Peled, 'El'ad Peled, Mati Tamir, 'Avraham Pri, Ya'aqov Rabin, Yitzhaq Shomron, Dan Sharoni, Natan Meron, Menahem Rotam, 'Avraham Reshef, 'Amnon

Generals to the right of Center

Bar Kokhba, Moshe Gonen, Shmu'el Lahat, Shlomo Peled, Beni Peled, Yosi Sagi', Yehoshu'a Sharon, 'Ari'el 'Even, Ya'aqov 'Ar'el, Shlomo Mat, Dani 'Eytan, Refa'el Ze'evi, Rehov'om 'Avraham, Yafe Goren, Shlomo Peron, Mordekhai

Eighty-four generals have been discharged from the general staff from 1965 till today. The overwhelming majority lean in the direction of Labor.

The army is not a political body. No one has the right to ask a commander who is a candidate for advancement, what his views are, or what party he will vote for. Apparently the top echelon of the IDF should have split

more or less like the rest of the population, half on the right and half on the left. But that was only apparently.

According to a nonscientific check that we conducted, 55.9 percent of IDF generals who have been discharged since the mid 60's support Labor and the left. Only 17.8 percent support Likud and the right. The remainder, over the length of their civilian careers, either were not identified one way or the other or did not make any clear pronouncement.

In determining the political inclination of a general, we relied on clear party activity or on pronouncements in the newspapers or on declarations in social fora. Appearance in one of the camps does not mean the general was a member of that camp but simply that he had a greater affinity for the positions of the camp in which he appeared.

The claim that most of the generals go with whoever is in power and conform to the appointed minister does not hold up. Even after 1977, the date of the "coup" and the ascendancy of Likud to power, there was no rush of generals to Likud and to the right. Many of the retired generals prefer to go openly to the opposition camp, while others do not go into politics at all. It is interesting to note that those who incline to the right do not necessarily turn to Likud. Refa'el Eytan and Rehov'om Ze'evi prefer to go further right, which testifies to an ideological stance and not a run for office and glory.

Analysts give a number of explanations for this breakdown. The upper echelon of the IDF was formed after the establishment of the State by Palmah [Striking Force of the Hagannah] veterans and "our people." Ben-Gurion, a domineering defense minister, took pains not to advance undesirable people of both the left and the right. Neither Herut nor the Communists in the army. The effects lingered long term. Also influential was the fact that Labor settlements always remained loyal to the defense establishment and sent the best of their sons into the army. Many kibbutz members stayed in the army by directive of the movement and attained senior ranks.

Even during a large portion of the Likud period, the defense establishment was ruled by Labor people. In the period when Likud people served as Defense Minister, they were not successful in advancing their people. It may be that Likud, because of their stance favoring the independence of the military, was prevented from attempting to advance its people. Even if such attempts were made, the Likud ministers discovered that the effort required a long time and was almost impossible without the infrastructure of a youth movement or of a pioneering settlement movement responsive to party dictates and willing to volunteer its people for lifetime service in the army.

'Who Is a Rabbi' Question Analyzed

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p B1

[Article by B. Michael]

[Text] There is one blessing in the Ethiopian kesses affair: It makes clear this point, that many intelligent people are inclined to mistake it for the seasonal outbreak of the "Who is a Rabbi" scandals.

In each of the previous outbreaks (except perhaps for the Brother Daniel Rufheisen affair), the real question was not "Who is a Jew" but "Who is a Rabbi." To put it another way, not whether a gentile who has undergone a Reform conversion is a Jew but whether the rabbi who converted him is a "qualified" rabbi (according to the rabbinic oligarchy) authorized to perform conversions; not whether a couple celebrating a Conservative wedding are married but whether the rabbi who joined them in wedlock is one authorized to perform marriages; not whether food bearing the seal of the "Antwerp Board of Rabbis" is kosher but whether the Belgian rabbi who applied the stamp is worthy of a seal of approval from the rabbis of Jerusalem's "Hekhal Shlomo" synagogue.

Far more than the rabbinate cares whether there is another person in the world who mistakenly believes that he is a Jew, or a couple who err in believing that they are married, or a sardine falsely holding itself out as kosher, it cares whether someone obtains the imprimatur of a rabbi. For the rabbinate, like every monopoly with power, fights tooth and nail lest it lose even a shred of its control.

This time, it is difficult to make a mistake. It is absolutely clear this time that the dispute centers on a genuine issue: Who is a rabbi? The kesses are explicitly seeking to be considered equal in stature to the rabbis. And with the question thus laid bare, so also are highlighted the arrogance and pretensions, to which even those on the Ethiopian side are subject, that accompany the public debate. They too invariably rely on the expression, "Why do we not register them, why do we not give them what they want." As if we are the givers and benefactors and they the beggars at the door deserving of our largesse.

We are speaking here, after all, of a community going back hundreds if not thousands of years, whose ways, religious laws, and rabbis are as worthy and righteous as the community of rabbinic Judaism. A community that to the same extent can claim that it does not recognize rabbinic marriages, deny Orthodox conversions, and spit in abhorrence on every scrap of food that bears only a rabbinical court's stamp.

This time, rabbinic Orthodoxy faces not reformists of whatever stripe, who appear to be rebels against the authority of the law. This time, it faces another orthodoxy, as strict and exacting as it is (and according to the book by Professor Corinaldi, on many points even more

rigorous than rabbinic orthodoxy). It is an orthodoxy that probably will generate its own reformists and likely will struggle against them with the same holy wrath with which the rabbis have fought Reform and Conservative Judaism. In the meantime, however, it is a Judaism that observes the Torah and commandments in every respect. Until a divine voice descends from heaven and declares who is right, their rabbis do not stand one step lower than those of the official rabbinate.

Indeed, it is not at all clear why they are even seeking the rabbinate's recognition of the kesses. Why do they not continue living and conducting themselves in accordance with the precepts of their community and its spiritual leaders, without paying the slightest heed to rabbinical recognition or nonrecognition of their ways? Nothing terrible will happen, to be sure. Will the rabbinate and the Ministry of the Interior refuse to register their couples as married? So, then they will not be registered. Who will that disturb?

In the reply to this question there is no small measure of absurdity. It turns out that recognition or its absence for weddings performed by kesses is important to the Ethiopians mostly because of bank mortgages.... In other words, more of a financial interest than a theological one. Bank officers refuse to provide mortgages to couples married by kesses. But there is a solution even to that. Ya'akov Tzur, the former Minister of the Interior, used to instruct bank officers to accept such couples as a family for mortgage purposes. Minister [Yitzhak] Peretz, of course, revoked those instructions. Would [current] Minister [Ya'ir] Tzaban not be glad to reinstate them?

And if (I nearly added, "with God's help") there should be someone stupid enough to bring legal action against a kes for performing a forbidden marriage, that would be a golden opportunity to present to a secular Israeli court (and who knows, maybe to the Israeli Legislature, too) an especially intriguing legal and theological question.

The law governing rabbinical courts (marriage and divorce) provides in paragraph 2 that "Jewish marriages and divorces shall be performed in Israel according to the law of the Torah." That is the whole law, which does not explain what "the law of the Torah" means.

It has never happened that the orthodox interpretation of the term "the law of the Torah" has faced a competing orthodox interpretation. The rabbinic law of the Torah has never been challenged by a pre-rabbinic law of the Torah which, although it does not include all the Sephardic-Polish variations, one would find very difficult to disprove as a law of the Torah in every way.

Meanwhile, the kesses and their community are invited to heckle the rabbinate with a long cat-call. They may discover that from the moment the rabbinate realizes that they do not give a damn about it, it will suddenly display tremendous flexibility (as proved by the haredi community, which rejects both the state and the rabbinate; for all that, the rabbinate does not dare deny the authority of its rabbis).

Ethiopian Leader on Rabbinic Training, Society
93AE0019A Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 14 Sep 92
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[Article by Avirama Golan]

[Text] Two and one-half years ago, Kes Amha Nageta, 65, immigrated with his wife and young children from Sirmala, near Gondar. He has lived with them since then at an absorption center in Netanya. His son, Efraim Nageta, who immigrated in 1984, helps Rabbi David Shalush, who serves on the Netanya Religious Council, register Ethiopian couples who ask him to marry them. Two of Kes Nageta's 10 children did not immigrate to Israel; their fate is unknown. One was drafted into the Ethiopian army while his brother disappeared en route from Ethiopia to Sudan. Although he understands questions in Hebrew, Kes Nageta has difficulty speaking the language. He speaks in a low voice, smiling even when he has something harsh to say. His son, who does not dare cut him off, waits patiently for him to finish and then translates.

Were it not for the fact that the kesses lack ordination and are divided from one another and their community, Kes Nageta today would be a man of senior rank, at least for the Beita Israel community, comparable in stature to one of the elders of the Council of Rabbinic Sages at the least. According to him, the Ethiopian community by its nature is a society whose life springs from religion and tradition. Clearly, the kesses, the community's spiritual leaders, are not merely arbiters of rabbinic law or marriage arrangers. They are leaders who were trained for their role and stood at the top of the traditional hierarchical ladder of Ethiopia's Jews for generations. Since their departure from Ethiopia for Israel, the hierarchy has collapsed, leaving the community bereft of leadership.

Kes Nageta is worried more by this than he is by the clash with the rabbinate. "A community without leaders and social order," he says, "faces the danger of disintegration, loss of direction and internal strife." The younger generation, he asserts, is suffering a serious crisis of values of which Israeli society is unaware and perhaps even making no attempt to deal with.

[HA'ARETZ] What must a young Ethiopian do to become a Kes?

[Amha] He must complete an extended course of training beginning at a young age. Parents of children interested in starting down this path of studies apply to the sages of their community when the child is five or six years old. The sages first examine the Judaism of the family as far back as eight or 12 generations so they can be absolutely certain that no branch of the family has intermarried. Then they study the family genealogy. Finally, there are tests and examinations for the boy himself to see if he is fit and of strong character, and to assure that he is in good health.

[HA'ARETZ] Where does he study?

[Amha] A boy chosen for studies leaves his parents' home and moves with three or four other boys like him into his teacher's house. The teacher is called "mamher" and is a sort of rabbi and scholar paid with contributions from the community. For 15 years and sometimes longer, the boy remains with the mamher, studying torah, all the laws of Judaism and the customs of the community.

[HA'ARETZ] Do they not spend time with other children?

[Amha] The discipline of studies with a mamher is very rigorous. Boys in these studies do not leave the fenced enclosure of the village grounds. They also perform certain jobs: in the kitchen, cleaning up, and so on. This little school is conducted in the closed circle of study and work. During their studies, there are tests and criticism.

[HA'ARETZ] Who tests them?

[Amha] The community hierarchy is very clear and well-defined. There are committees of mamhers, there are decisions of the kesses, who meet periodically for discussions, and there is the decision of the Great Kes. The kesses themselves are elected by democratic vote. Likewise, appointment to the post of kes at the completion of studies is made by joint decision and consultation with senior kesses.

[HA'ARETZ] Are the boys fit for their jobs when they finish their studies? Can they begin to work?

[Amha] Not yet. The mamhers study for 15 years. Keep in mind that this is oral study, memorization of all the laws and judgments, which requires a long time. Our students know the entire Bible by heart. When he finishes his abstract studies, a candidate for kes begins to study the practical side, including ritual slaughter, performance of wedding ceremonies and more. The Great Kes brings with him a special committee to test the candidate in actual practice, and the teacher, the mamher, recommends his better students to the committee. At this stage, the student, who is now 20 or 21 years old, must get married. If he does not, he will be unable to become a kes. Interest in women cannot be permitted to distract him from his work.

[HA'ARETZ] And after all that....?

[Amha] He must learn to fulfil his task as a leader. At that time, while he is a young kes, he must be well-versed in the community's rules of behavior and discover the qualities of a leader. In an Ethiopian Jewish community, a kes never stops studying and is constantly being tested by those higher up in the hierarchy. Even the most senior must be appraised because their selection derives not from their appointment but from popular vote.

[HA'ARETZ] What happened to the kesses when immigration to Israel began?

[Amha] You must understand that the spiritual leadership of the Ethiopian Jews never had anything to do with politics. On the contrary, kesses throughout the communities saw to it that politics did not invade the zone behind the fences and that the power of the leader would be independent, drawn exclusively from religion. In this hierarchical structure, every man knows his place, from the great kes to the smallest child. All cooperative action is based on the most important value of the community, respect.

The crisis began even before we got on the airplanes, during the journey to Addis Abbaba when people lived in camps and the leaders, isolated from one another, lost their power. Jewish Agency officials knew very well the connection between the religious hierarchy and the community's social order. Nonetheless, they arbitrarily chose Rabbi Hadana, who has no authority, and made him rabbi, so to speak, of the community.

[HA'ARETZ] Who ought to have been the leader?

[Amha] The Great Kes, Uri Ben-Barukh, who immigrated in 1977 and settled in Ashdod, was the leader. But because the community was dispersed and out of touch, that had no significance. He died in 1984 and the community since then has not had a leader.

[HA'ARETZ] Do the kesses not hold meetings in Israel?

[Amha] There was an attempt but it failed.

[HA'ARETZ] Did you know before you immigrated that you would not hold the position of kes here?

[Amha] I did not know anything and I did not ask anything. I had a glorious picture of what it would be like here. In my imagination, everything in Israel had to be more beautiful and more perfect than in Ethiopia. I was sure that everything here was holy, that life was completely religious, that we would be allowed to observe the commandments in the most perfect way on holy land in Jerusalem. I never imagined that I would languish in an absorption center, severed from my community, isolated from other kesses and unable even to marry couples.

[HA'ARETZ] Is that what hurts most? The prohibition against performing weddings?

[Amha] No. Of course, the greatest blow, in the beginning, was the knowledge that the rabbis here generally do not recognize us as Jews. It took me a while to digest that. In the first days after immigration, I was busy getting settled. I searched for and found my children who got here earlier, I tried to adjust to the surroundings, to understand those things that I eat here, just what is that place they call an absorption center. Later, very slowly, I came to understand that I had no position here and no community, that Judaism is different. What hurts the

most, however, are not those things that they do not permit us to do, like performing weddings, but things that we cannot observe in the conditions of this country and that are as important to us as the air we breathe, without which observance of the commandments is severely hindered.

[HA'ARETZ] Do you mean the laws of purity and cleanliness?

[Amha] Yes. This is a grave matter. The fact that the kesses are unable to slaughter for themselves is also serious.

[HA'ARETZ] The rabbis contend that it is impossible to ordain you because you do not recognize the oral Torah.

[Amha] Please, I am ready to sit and learn what I do not know. I have studied all my life, it will not bother me to continue my studies. But more than I am bothered by the fact that I cannot perform weddings, I am worried that the community is falling apart, that our youths live in a society whose entire social fabric and underlying values are crumbling without anything to replace them. How can I today attract a boy who came from Ethiopia to religious studies and the leadership and thereby build the next generation of leaders? The young people ask me, "Why should I study with you when I know that the rabbinate will not recognize these studies?" It would be good if studies were integrated here so that our children could study our tradition along with everything they need to know to get along in the Israeli way of life.

"They do not understand here that all the problems of the Ethiopian immigrants begin and end with religion," says Efraim Nageta, a knitted skullcap on his head, chimes in. "The disintegration of the community is a tragedy. There are so many organizations, all of them made up of rabbis. The establishment could step in and reach a decision on the fate of the community without interfering."

When I asked Kes Nageta who ought to take the position of the Great Kes, Uri Ben-Barukh, and become leader of the community, he smiled in silence. "My father received a letter from Kes Ben-Barukh," Efraim Nageta answers for him. "Ben-Barukh knew that he was dying and wanted my father to take his place until the council of kesses picked a new Great Kes." Kes Nageta keeps the letter in his room at the absorption center in Netanya. The council of kesses never convened.

The last time that Kes Nageta married a couple was in Ethiopia a short time before he immigrated. When he describes the ceremony and all the preparations for it, including tying the red and white braided cord to the groom's head and the water used for drinking and celebrating, his eyes shine. Despite the insults and the disappointment, he still hopes to perform a wedding like that in Israel.

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